

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE MILLIPEDE, *Glomeris marginata* (Villers)

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The common pill millipede, *Glomeris marginata*, is the most easily recognized of the British millipedes, provided care is taken to distinguish it from the pill woodlice, *Armadillidium* spp., which can also roll up into a ball. The only other pill millipede in Scotland is the rare *Stygioglomeris crinita* Brölemann, which is very much smaller (c. 1 mm in diameter when rolled), white, blind and is usually buried in the topsoil. In contrast *Glomeris marginata* is dark and shiny, up to c.5 mm in diameter when rolled, and is usually easy to find in leaf-litter and under logs and stones in broad-leaved woodland, e.g. at the Falls of Clyde.

Although widely distributed in broad-leaved woodland in southern Scotland, *G. marginata* has so far never been found north of the Forth/Clyde (British Myriapod Group, 1988). It was therefore a surprise to find a colony at Wanlockhead, Dumfries-shire (NS 8613), the highest village in Scotland at c. 460 m. A half-hour search around the village on 21 June 1996 failed to find any millipedes other than a single *G. marginata*. (No millipede species are confined to high altitudes and only a few are normally found even around 500 m, mainly *Ommatoiulus sabulosus* (L.) and *Julus scandinavicus* Latzel). A further half-hour on 23 June revealed three more *G. marginata* and still no other millipedes.

There is no woodland at Wanlockhead although there are some scattered trees, mainly sycamore and beech, and the *Glomeris* were found under stones on grass, grazed by sheep, about 10 m away from some beech trees. In contrast large numbers of stones on grass under beeches a few hundred metres away produced nothing.

During a survey for both pill millipedes and pill woodlice in the Lothians (Saville, 1995) *G. marginata* was found at 11 sites, the highest, and only non-woodland one, being at about 300 m on a roadside verge in moorland in the Moorfoot Hills, NT 3650, 28 April 1993 (B. Saville, pers. comm.). In a survey of the Sheffield area of the southern Pennines the highest record for *G. marginata* was at 330 m in scree at the top of a limestone dale (Richards, 1995 and pers. comm.). The ability of *G. marginata* to survive at Wanlockhead deepens the mystery of its apparent absence north of the Forth/Clyde. Perhaps it may turn up in some of the west Highland oakwoods; a considerable amount of searching in the wooded dens of Fife has so far failed to find it.

Incidentally the pill woodlouse *Armadillidium vulgare* (Latreille) has been recorded north of the Forth/Clyde only at a few localities on the Fife coast and one on the Tay Estuary near Dundee, so any 'pills' north of the Forth/Clyde are worth recording.

REFERENCES

- British Myriapod Group (1988). *Preliminary atlas of the millipedes of the British Isles*. Institute of Terrestrial Ecology.
- Richards, J.P. (1995). *Millipedes, centipedes and woodlice of the Sheffield area*. Sorby Natural History Society, Sheffield.

Saville, B. (1995). *Lothian pill-bug survey report*. Lothian Biological Records Centre.

Editors note: our referee queried the use of the word 'dens': should it be 'glens'? Dr Corbet notes that the word is current in Fife and Angus as meaning a small valley. The Concise Scots Dictionary (1985) gives its usage as general, but I have only heard it in East coast and Borders songs. Have any readers experience of this word in the West of Scotland?